

Fruita School House  
Capitol Reef National Monument  
Wayne County  
Utah

HABS No. U-21

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
Western Office, Division of Design and Construction  
450 Golden Gate Avenue  
San Francisco, California

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PHOTOGRAPH-DATA BOOK REPORT  
HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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FRUITA SCHOOL HOUSE

Capitol Reef National Monument  
Wayne County, Utah

LOCATION: North side of Highway Number 24, Fruita, Utah  
OWNER: National Park Service  
OCCUPANT: None  
USE: Formerly a Grade School for the Fruita Community

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Fruita School House is one of the few remaining early structures in this region of Utah. Because of the geographical isolation of the valleys of Sulphur Creek and Fremont River, this section of the state was the last to be explored and settled. The first permanent settler, Niels Johnson, located a homestead near the junction of the streams in 1880. The tillable land in the narrow valleys could support only 8 to 10 families, and the almost impassable roads isolated the community from the outside world.

As the earliest school house of the area and typical of certain log structures built at the time, it is a significant building. It is a well constructed building of squared logs; the sturdy structure, and fine detailing of window and door trim is a tribute to the local builders who probably had little professional assistance.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The one-room school building was built by the pioneers of the community who were largely members of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints. It was constructed on the site where it now stands in the early 1890's.

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Elijah Cutler Bahunin donated the ground before 1892, and inquires indicate that Bahunin and others of the community built the structure in 1892, or possibly as late as 1894. Nettie Bahunin, daughter of the above, was the first teacher, and eleven children of the Bahunin, Pierce and Pendleton families were enrolled early. In 1895, the district was organized and known as the Junction School Precinct. The flat sod roof was rebuilt in gabled form and the interior was re-finished about 1912 or 1913. It continued to be used as the grade school of the community until 1941. Since that date it has remained unoccupied.

#### ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

The Fruita School House is a one-story, one-room building built of squared log construction. The outside dimensions are 17'-0" by 20'-0".

#### EXTERIOR

The floor sills and exterior log walls are set on masonry foundation walls that were built of squared blocks of Wingate sandstone. The logs of the exterior walls are somewhat variable in size and form. Those on the front (south) wall are fairly uniform and squared and the thin joints are chinked neatly with lime mortar. On the sides and rear of the building the logs are more variable in size and some are slabbed with rounded corners; there the mortar chinking is much wider. At all corners the logs are carefully notched and fitted.

The gabled ends, added during the remodelling just prior to World War I, are stud framed, and are faced with yellow pine drop-siding. Facia trim and soffit boards are also of pine. The windows are now boarded up to prevent vandalism. The sash of several of the windows are missing, and the few remaining in place are badly damaged. The upper sash are fixed. The casing trim on the exterior jambs is plain, but the head has a pedimented design with moulds and brackets; it is suggestive of design of the Victorian period. The trim on the head of the door is quite similar, but a diamond escutcheon is added. The original door is missing. The logs and exterior trim were never painted or otherwise treated, but in the arid climate they are quite well preserved and need only minor repair or replacement. The wood shingles of the roof are split and curled and need to be replaced.

## INTERIOR

The tongue-and-groove wood flooring is in fair condition, and is set on 2" x 6" wood joists. Apparently the original log walls were unfinished on the inside, but when roof reconstruction was carried out, the interior walls were refinished. Wire mesh was attached to the logs and lime plaster was applied. A seven inch moulded baseboard was added. The plastered walls are now marred and are in bad condition. When the new gabled roof was added, the ceiling was raised about 2' - 4' above the eave line. The sloping under side of the roof, and the flat portion of the ceiling were finished with 3½" beaded ceiling board.

Rafters and ceiling joists are 2" x 4" in size. To prevent the danger of fire where the stove pipe met the ceiling, a concrete chimney base was supported on the ceiling rafters. Above this base the brick flue was built and extends about two feet above the ridge of the roof.

Near the door on the inside front wall there is a simple coat rack built with pegs in a board which is attached to the plastered wall. There is a framed, painted blackboard, not now in place, which was attached to the north wall of the school room. Interviews with local residents who attended the school indicate that the first desks and benches were of the homemade type; later standard double desks, with inkwells, were installed. A pot-bellied stove was used for heating.

## SITE

The school house is located on the north side of Sulphur Creek, just north of the recently constructed Highway Number 24. It is picturesquely situated at the base of 800 foot sandstone cliffs on the Capitol Reef escarpment.

## REFERENCES

Brochure, Capitol Reef National Monument, Utah, May, 1963, Department of Interior, National Park Service.

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Interviews with William T. Krueger and Bernard G. Tracy, September 1, 1964.

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